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ABSTRACT

The social context activity model of adult literacy instruction posits that literacy is a relative phenomena and literacy needs are specific to the individual and the social context within which the individual operates. Instruction is based on the concept of activity with a prospective focus on the formation of students' shared and personal literacy motives and goals. The social context program contains four phases: (1) planning; (2) assessment; (3) transition; and (4) maintenance. In the planning phase, common interest and needs of the social unit cluster are identified, students are accessed through their social unit, and small learning groups are formed. Three intermittent assessment phase sessions are conducted to identify student self-perceptions used to guide content of the literacy instructional activities. The transition phase includes nonthreatening reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities to build peer support and transform students' negative resignations toward learning. The maintenance phase contains more structured literacy activities used to teach students self-directional mediational devices that promote independence in continued literacy improvement. (Two figures diagramming the social context model are included; 40 references are attached.) (Author/RS)

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A REPORT ON THE SOCIAL CONTEXT MODEL OF ADULT LITERACY

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Abstract

This article explained the social context activity model of adult literacy instruction. Failure of the traditional basic skills instructional model was attributed to its retrospective focus on student attainment of preestablished literacy skills and the assumption that student motives and goals in literacy activities are compatible with these skills. The social context activity model posits that literacy is a relative phenomena and literacy needs are specific to the individual and the social context within which the individual operates. Instruction was based on the concept of activity with a prospective focus on the formation of students' shared and personal literacy motives and goals. The social context program contained four phases. In the Planning Phase, common interest and needs of the social unit cluster were identified, students were accessed through their social unit, and small learning groups were formed. Three intermittent Assessment Phase sessions were conducted to identify student self-perceptions used to guide content of the literacy instructional activities. The Transition Phase included nonthreatening reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities to build peer support and transform students' negative resignations toward learning. The Maintenance Phase contained more structured literacy activities used to teach students self-directive mediational devices that promote independence in continued literacy improvement.

A Social Context Activity Model of Adult Literacy Instruction

"i Did have a chang to go to
soch

i hade to work
wnhe i was
a little

So i weood like to
lrun to
rite and read

i taank you all for
the chan to lrin"

This writing sample resembled an entry in a young child's elementary school writing journal, but it was composed by 54-year-old Martha. The writing sample was obtained during one of Martha's early sessions in a social context adult literacy program. The purposes of this paper were to explain a theoretical rationale for the social context activity model and to present an adult literacy curriculum that can be adapted to a variety of educational settings.

We chose an analysis of Martha's writing sample as a context for explaining the theoretical rationale of the social context activity model in contrast to the basic skills model predominantly used in adult literacy programs. The analysis was based on the following two questions:

1. How did Martha become an undereducated adult?
2. How can we guide Martha toward literacy improvement?

The answer to the first question included the basic tenets of the learning philosophies underlying each model. The answer

to the second question dealt with the two instructional program designs.

Basic Skills Literacy Model

The basic skills analysis began with a popular allegation, Martha "fell through the cracks" in our educational system and needs help learning to read and write. The answer to question one was minimized to the learner's previous failure in school. This type of simplistic analysis has fortified the American view of adult literacy programs as the literate teacher "doling out" basic skills to an illiterate other who has failed to learn these skills (Freire, 1973, 1978).

The answer to the second question maximized the role of failure to the driving force behind the basic skills instructional design. Literacy instruction consisted of filling in discrete reading and writing skills that the learner previously failed to master. The linear three-step model included: (a) assessment of the entering student's basic reading competence, (b) teaching generic sight vocabulary, phonics, and comprehension skills, followed by (c) postassessment to determine if the learner attains a preestablished reading proficiency level.

Adult basic skills literacy programs were criticized for resembling the typical learning contexts and social structures found in schools (Hunter & Harmon, 1979) and using fixed societal standards of literacy that perpetuate failure (Levine, 1982). Evaluations of existing Adult Basic Education and volunteer

programs identified spurious reports of achievement ignoring the lack of practical significance for students still reading at an elementary grade level after one or two years in the programs (Diekhoff, 1988), high rates of absenteeism, and high rates of both student and tutor drop out (Balmouth, 1988; Rogers, 1984).

In a call for changes in adult literacy programs, Kazemek (1988) pointed out that the basic skills approach is built on a misperception "...that literacy consists of a set of basic skills or abilities which all literate adults have or should have," (p. 466). This definition of literacy decontextualized reading and writing to a mechanistic process of skill application and spurred two fallacious assumptions inherent in the basic skills design.

The first assumption was that an ideal set of literacy skills could be identified and measured regardless of the body of research that clearly refutes the existence of any one set of reading skills (Davis, 1968; McNeil, 1976; Spearitt, 1972). For the past two decades, educators and policy makers have been preoccupied in a futile quest to identify, categorize, assess, and rename this hypothetical set of basic literacy skills (APL, 1977; Kirsch & Jungeblut, 1986). During the 1970's, the set of basic skills was extended from school literacy skills to include functional literacy skills; a focus on job literacy skills was added in the 1980's (see Stedman and Kaestle, 1987, for a review of literacy trends over the past century). The 1990's began with an attempt by the National Assessment of Educational Progress to establish agreement on a national definition of literacy

(Rothman, 1990). However, this new definition of literacy was actually a process of renaming functional literacy to document literacy and extending the list of school literacy skills to include a document literacy category, with the basic skills misperception remaining intact.

The second fallacious assumption of basic skills programs was that students' motives and goals in learning activities are compatible with an ideal set of basic literacy skills educators deem appropriate. This assumption decontextualized the learner from instruction resulting in programs that lacked a practical significance for adult learners. Recruitment, absenteeism, and dropout problems of existing basic skills programs provided evidence of need for adult literacy programs focusing on more than student goal attainment of preestablished literacy skills.

Social Context Activity Literacy Model

In the social context analysis of Martha's writing sample, the answer to question one was expanded beyond her failure to master skills. It included Martha's literacy motives and goals that were formed within the contexts of her previous learning activities and will affect her future performance in an adult program. The Social Context Adult Literacy curriculum was designed to answer question two. Guiding Martha toward literacy improvement was accomplished by providing instruction that focused on student goal formation instead of goal attainment.

The social context activity model was developed from Soviet learning theory (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978, 1981), the concept of

activity (Leont'ev, 1981), and Western motivational research. Vygotsky (1981) described learning as individuals mastering and internalizing social forms of behavior during social interaction with others. Vygotsky's learning theory was particularly applicable to literacy instruction due to its emphasis on language and social interaction. For Vygotsky, language was the means of social interaction and thought because words mediated learning in a social context (Leont'ev, 1981).

In the concept of activity, Leont'ev (1981) explained how the learner's self-knowledge, motives, and goals develop during activity. As an individual engaged in an activity, she or he correlated the activity, the product of the activity, and the self. Cognition, new self-perceptions, motives, and goals emerged from the activity (Davydod, 1981; Leontiev, 1978, 1981). Diener and Dweck (1978, 1980) reported that as high achieving students engaged in a difficult learning activity, they applied self-monitoring strategies and attributed their success to effort, an internal controllable factor. Literate adults had an educational history or correlating mediational devices used in school learning activities, the product of the activities (success or mastery), and themselves (knowledge that they can learn).

In contrast, the road to undereducated adulthood involved a continuous pattern of failure in learning activities. Undereducated adults had a history of correlating school literacy activities, failure in the activities, and self-knowledge that

they could not learn. In Western research the motives behind low achieving students' negative resignations toward learning have been associated with their low expectations of success and their perceived inability to overcome failure (Johnston & Winograd, 1985). Nonachieving students attributed learning failures to external factors beyond their control (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978) or low ability, an internal factor beyond their control (Abramson, Garber, & Seligman, 1980; Thomas, 1979).

The concept of activity was applied to the developmental literacy process as shown in figure 1. In typical school literacy instruction, the goal and literacy activity were prescribed by the teacher. Outcomes of the learning activity included more than achievement or nonachievement of the academic goal. Learners' self-perceptions of either accomplishment of failure were also outcomes that determined their new motives and goals when faced with future learning activities.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Coles (1984) and Johnston (1985) conducted case studies that supported the relationship between adult learners' personal and social histories and their motives, goals and performance in literacy tutoring sessions. These authors reported that adult clients' perceived inability to overcome literacy failure was a major factor affecting their attendance patterns, reading and writing development, anxiety, and psychological adjustment

associated with becoming literate. These findings have seldom been applied in adult literacy programs.

Figure 2 showed the concept of activity applied to adult literacy. In the social context model, students moved from negative resignations toward learning to integrating reading and writing into their everyday lives. Adult students entered the literacy activity with histories of negative activity outcomes including nonachievement and passive failure. Martha's initial writing sample exposed her negative patterns of internalized failure that had persisted to the point of becoming personal coping defenses used to justify her previous school learning failure, (e.g., "I did not have a chance to go to school. I had to work when I was a little girl." [message transcribed]). Transforming learners' negative motives and goals included removal of their personal coping defenses through engagement in new literacy activity. Confronting learners about the validity of their personal defenses did not aid in this transformation because these coping defenses are a product of students' self-perceptions and, therefore, are personally valid to the individual. Reshaping the learners' motives and goals toward literacy improvement was accomplished through the content, organization, and social interaction of the learning activities used in the social context activity program.

Insert Figure 2 about here

The social context activity model was built on the definition of literacy as a personal and social act occurring in various situational contexts; it varies according to the purposes of the writer or speaker, the motives, goals, and tasks of the reader or listener, and the type of text involved in the literacy activity (Guthrie & Kirsch, 1983; Kazemek, 1988). This definition of literacy as a relative phenomena spurred the following three basic assumptions inherent in the social context program design: (a) literacy instruction is meaningful when it acknowledges students' perceptions related to their previous learning histories; (b) literacy instruction has utility when it focuses on continuous learning beyond formal instruction; and (c) continuous learning entails formation of students' goals and motives for improving literacy performance.

Social Context Adult Literacy Curriculum

The social context curriculum integrated reading, writing, speaking, and listening through philosophy, instructional organization, and teaching methods. It was not a prepackaged set of basic skills tests and workbook drills used in the traditional adult tutor-learner diad. It was a design for literacy programs that will have practical significance for the adult learners within the particular situational context in which they exist.

Undereducated adults tended to cluster into various groups throughout the country (e.g., industry, welfare agencies, health care facilities, institutional maintenance and support employees, churches, etc.). The goal, design, and content of the social

context curriculum were based on the common interests, attitudes, and perceptions that bond particular groups of adults into social units. The curriculum was explained using the social unit from which it was developed, a group of institutional maintenance and support employees.

The social context curriculum was prefaced with two important conditions crucial to successful implementation. First, the program directors and teachers accepted the definition of literacy as a personal and social act that is context-bound and were knowledgeable in the area of adult learning as opposed to lay tutors. Second, the social context curriculum was not a linear instructional design. The four program components were a planning phase, an assessment phase, a transition phase, and a maintenance phase. The phases were reported sequentially, but each frequently emerged within the other three phases.

Goal and Objectives

The goal of the curriculum was to use a group setting to move undereducated individuals from states of isolation from print to the formation of shared and personal goals and motives for integrating literacy into their everyday lives. This goal was accomplished by: (a) accessing and instructing learners through the social units in which they tend to cluster, and (b) using the concept of activity, a learning theory that acknowledges student motives and goals as a product of each learning activity.

Planning Phase

The planning phase was crucial to the content of the instructional activities and the recruitment and retention of students. Planning activities related to the needs and interests of both the students and the institution, business, or agency providing the literacy program. Planning activities included identifying and collecting data on the social unit cluster, collecting site-specific instructional materials, recruiting participants, and scheduling small group instruction sessions.

Initial identification of the social unit's common interests and literacy needs was done in consultation with the unit supervisors or directors. Our program served a group of university maintenance and support employees. We consulted with the Director of Human Resources (Personnel Director) and the Supervisor of Landscape and Building Services to collect basic data on the university employees social unit. We also identified institutional support incentives in the form of stipends, work release time, promotions, or recognition within the organization. Our students were granted two hours per week release time for instruction and awarded certificates of participation in six week intervals with duplicates placed in their personnel files.

The recruitment activity was a group orientation session that establishes the instructional design of the entire literacy program. Peer support and social interaction were essential to developing individual motivation to volunteer in the program, (i.e., the product of the recruitment activity). Although

content of the discussion in the recruitment activity will vary according to the specific interests common to the social unit, the following structural elements of the recruitment activity were included:

1. Begin the session by stating up front that the institution, business, or agency is beginning a literacy program for the social unit. Explain the internal support incentives of the program.

2. Use questions to illicit discussion about literacy, (e.g., "Does anyone know what a literacy program is? Do you know anyone who has been in a literacy program?")

3. Define literacy within the social context perspective, (e.g., "Literacy is not learning to read and write in school. It is an ongoing process that continues to develop every day of your life. Your literacy needs change when you begin to run your own household, get a new job, get new equipment or new duties in your job, have children, etc.") Give specific examples. We used our jobs as examples, highlighting the social aspects of literacy with our colleagues, (e.g., reading about and discussing new teaching methods, sharing in writing and editing with our colleagues).

4. Use a peer example that has improved his or her life due to literacy instruction. We used a building services employee who had been promoted to supervisor.

5. Have each member of the group complete a sign-up flier that contains only their name, address, phone number and yes/no

participation boxes to check. Open admission to the program was essential for maintaining the social unit, accepting the individual's perceived literacy needs, and curtailing isolation of participants from their social unit.

The final planning activity was scheduling instruction sessions that begin within one week following the recruitment activity. Small groups of four to six students were scheduled for biweekly learning sessions. Groups were formed according to students' personal needs related to their work schedules, transportation arrangements, family commitments, etc., and not based on their reading competency levels.

Assessment Phase

Assessment sessions were conducted following the recruitment activity and both instructional phases. Informal data was also collected in individual student folders containing writing samples and teacher anecdotal records maintained throughout the program.

In the first individual assessment sessions, students were surveyed in reading, writing, and self-perceptions related to literacy instruction. Consistent with the concept of activity, assessment yielded the products of the activity, motives and goals related to the activity, and the process used by the individual during engagement in the activity. Products of the initial assessment activities, measures of reading and writing skill, were not used to determine content for the curriculum instructional phases. Instead, data from surveys of students'

self-perceptions provided diagnostic information that determined the content for instructional activities.

An Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) was administered to give a view of the student engaged in a text reading activity. The IRI diagnostic focus was the student's use of context, message information, syntax, and graphophonic knowledge to comprehend the text passages. Following the comprehension questions, the students were asked how they figured out some of their answers. This type of informal text reading assessment frequently emerged later in the maintenance phase of instruction. The product of the IRI activity, instructional reading level, was of minimal importance as students were not grouped by ability or "matched" to reading materials by text levels.

Initial writing samples were collected by asking students to write about their previous experiences in school reading or writing activities. The diagnostic focus of the writing assessment was content, identifying the learners' patterns of internalized failure that will affect their literacy performance in the program. Product of the writing assessment activity, (i.e., spelling, mechanics, and sentence structure skills) were not used to determine specific writing skills taught in the instructional phases of the program.

A structured interview was conducted using questions relevant to the individual student and the social unit. Questions related to the individual were structured to obtain information about school history, reading and writing in everyday

life, speaking and listening performance, and strategies used when unknown words or difficult reading tasks are encountered. In our program, social unit questions were structured to obtain information about students' personal goals related to their past, present, and future employment.

The assessment data was analyzed to identify some basic learner characteristics common to the social unit. In general, our students expressed a negative resignation toward learning and low expectations of success. They felt their jobs were good compared to the poor ones they had before university employment, and they felt literacy improvement would help them very little at work. Only one student expressed a desire to learn to read some horticulture informational materials. The other students could not see a connection between improved literacy skill and their jobs and shared the perception that reading and writing were faculty and student job activities. They had basically isolated literacy from their personal, social, and job activities.

Our students expressed mild to extremely bizarre personal coping defenses used to justify previous literacy failure. All students blamed their parents for not helping them with schoolwork at home. Other external defenses ranged from dropping out of school for work to having female school teachers who were sexually attracted to them. Internal defenses ranged from not being as "smart" as their classmates to having a learning disability that was further aggravated by a schizophrenic condition developed in Viet Nam.

Transition Phase

The purposes of transition phase activities were to begin developing students' personal goals of improving literacy and to reduce their anxiety associated with these goals. Students entered the transition phase with a history of isolating literacy activities from their individual perception of the literacy tasks and perception of the self, (e.g., our students did not see a connection between improved literacy skill and their own personal, social, and employment activities). During transition, students moved from literacy isolation to the development of motives for involvement in the program by connecting success in literacy tasks to collaboration, hard work, and diligence.

The structure and content of the learning activities were crucial to student motivation. Students were immersed in nonthreatening reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities to facilitate teacher and peer support. the activities included exposure to a variety of literature and authors, developing individual silent reading through sustained silent reading, developing fluency through group chorale reading, journal writing, and group discussion of materials read or individual writing pieces shared with the group.

The organization for instruction was small learning groups with teacher emphasizing peer support, group cooperation, and successful group involvement in the tasks. In the first few group sessions, the teacher initiated discussion and encouraged students to offer comments or opinions about the materials read.

The group sessions moved from teacher-directed to student-directed literacy activities during the first few weeks of instruction as students began to initiate comments and questions about the readings and request materials or topics for the group to read and discuss. Material selection moved from teacher choice to student choice as the learning group selected a newspaper subscription, visited the library for access to independent reading materials, and engaged in booksharing activities.

As transition proceeded, the teacher moved into a mediational role emphasizing social interaction and strategies the group can use to become independent learners rather than memorization of rules. For example, students were asked to inspect their own writing pieces and identify words they wanted to spell correctly or sentences they chose to restructure. The teacher provided guidance in dictionary usage for correct spellings and word meanings. In sentence structure instruction, the teacher rewrote the sentence and read it orally, she helped members of the group orally compose new sentences using the identified structure, and group members practiced writing their new sentences.

Computer literacy introductory activities were initiated toward the conclusion of transition to acquaint students with micro-computers. These activities included computer introduction programs to reduce student "fear of technology," simulation games, typing tutorials, and educational and introductory

business software programs (see Dixon-Krauss & Jennings, 1990 for a list of software programs).

In the course of the transition phase, five of our thirty students chose to withdraw from the program and received teacher counseling related to their future educational goals. One student entered the local junior college, two entered vocational programs, and one left the social unit for a new job. The fifth student was promoted to a supervisory position, and therefore, did not want his co-workers to know about his literacy inadequacies affecting his capacity to make written personnel evaluations. He also refused an individual learning session option offered by the teacher. The three students that entered advanced educational programs continued to work in the computer literacy component and use the computer lab.

The second assessment session was conducted at the end of the Transition Phase. The session included a structured interview and a self-report of student literacy activities survey containing a high, medium, and low scoring scale. Content of the items included student perceptions of time spent reading and writing per week, variety of materials read, increased difficulty level of materials read, ability to use aids (e.g., dictionary, reference materials), functional reading ability, and need to do more reading and writing activities. The structured interview contained open-ended questions about students' perceptions related to their literacy improvement, worth of the

program, integration of literacy into their everyday lives, and types of instructional activities needed.

The second set of assessment data was analyzed to determine transition phase effectiveness on the students' literacy motive and goal transformations. In the self-report survey, eighty-five percent of students responded in the high and medium categories to all items except the use of instructional aids.

Informal data collected from the library circulation and reference desks and from the computer lab confirmed shifts in student motivation toward literacy improvement and independent learning. Most of our students were using the library to access reference materials about various topics they had independently sought to explore rather than select leisure reading materials on reserve for them. Several students reported spending their work break time reading library materials or discarded papers and pamphlets they collected from waste baskets in professors' offices. Computer lab records showed our students spending more independent practice hours in the computer lab than graduate and undergraduate students enrolled in educational computer courses.

In general, our students had moved from negative resignations toward learning to developing goals and motives for literacy improvement. In response to the types of literacy activities needed, all students wanted more structured reading and writing activities similar to those taught in school. Some even requested lessons taught from school English textbooks or reading workbooks like the ones their children were using in

school. Students displayed increased motivation and moved toward independent learning during transition, but their feelings of isolation from traditional literacy instruction persisted.

Maintenance Phase

The purpose of the Maintenance Phase was to develop students' independence in their literacy functioning, focusing on student movement from other-regulative to self-regulative learning behavior. According to the concept of activity, while students engage in learning activities, they internalized the structure of the activity (Leont'ev, 1978, 1981). The structure of literacy activities included directive and planning operations presented in the learning task as mediational devices students assimilate and use to control their own comprehension and production of written material. In the Western literature, these mediational devices were referred to as strategies, flexible plans used by the reader to aid in text comprehension (Brown, Campione, & Day, 1981; Duffy & Roehler, 1986; Monahan & Hinson, 1988).

The maintenance phase provided more structured literacy activities used for strategy instruction. The teacher's mediational role began with explanation and demonstration of the strategy followed by providing guidance of the learning group's strategy application. Various strategy instructional activities were used to help students develop reading comprehension by accessing prior knowledge, integrating prior knowledge with textual information, sorting important from extraneous text

information, reflecting on the activity structure, and reflecting on concepts presented in the text. Specific reading comprehension strategies taught included prediction, summarization, semantic mapping, semantic webbing, rewriting instructions chronologically, time line construction, and flow chart construction. Materials used in strategy instructional activities were job related, student selected, and teacher selected.

Writing instruction followed the writing process structure of prewriting preparation, drafting, and revision. In the prewriting stage, students chose the topic and form, generated ideas, and organized these idea. Prewriting activities included concept webbing, outlining, categorizing ideas, focused freewrites, and group discussions of descriptive, personal, persuasive, poetic, narrative, letters, and memorandum forms of written materials. The drafting stage focused on content rather than spelling and mechanics. Revision was done in individual or group conferences about content, sentence structure, or writing mechanics. Initially, the teacher modeled editing thoughts and markings. As the maintenance phase continued, the teacher encouraged the students to use editing marks, and initiate their own questions about content and mechanics. She also provided guidance in the use of dictionaries and grammar texts as writing aids. Computer literacy activities in word processing were added to the drafting and revision writing stages.

The final assessment session was conducted at the close of maintenance phase when students exited from the literacy program. Final assessment was used to check students' perceptions about their literacy success or failure, their goals and motives related to literacy learning, and their use of the reading and writing strategies taught. The self-report of student literacy activities survey was administered. Questions were added to the structured interview to assess the students' self-evaluation of their ability to use the reading and writing strategies taught and individual goals for future literacy improvement. Options for testing student's use of the reading comprehension strategies could have included testing each individual strategy using an appropriate text, administering an achievement test, or using an IRI. From a social context perspective, students' self evaluation of strategy use was the preferred measure because it includes the learners self-perceptions, motives, and goals, whereas the other traditional measures limit assessment data to achievement products of the maintenance activities. An individual conference was scheduled with each student to provide final assessment feedback and counseling regarding options for future literacy improvement.

In our program, the final set of assessment data was analyzed to evaluate the effectiveness of the social context curriculum. Results of the self-report survey showed over fifty percent of our students responded high to an increase in their reading and writing time, variety of materials read, difficulty

of materials read, and overall literacy skill. Students reported that functional reading and using reading aids were their weakest literacy areas. All students reported confidence in their use of prediction strategies, and semantic mapping, but all reported a weakness in using the writing process independently. Since our program was funded by an eight month grant that required documentation of students' reading improvement, we administered an alternate form of the IRI. All students had an initial to final assessment increase in reading grade levels, ranging from one to four levels. In the final assessment counseling session, students were directed to the university reading and writing improvement lab, adult education courses at the local junior college, and high school GED night classes.

Conclusion

The social context activity model of adult literacy posits that literacy is a relative phenomena; literacy needs are specific to the individual and the social context within which the individual operates. Based on the concept of activity (Leont'ev, 1981), learning was a continuous cycle of literacy activity engagement. Through activity engagement, the learner internalized the structure of the activity (i.e., the planning and directive strategies that serve as mediational devices) and formed new goals and motives for future learning activities.

Social context activity instruction had a prospective focus on student goal formation in contrast to the basic skills retrospective focus on student goal attainment of preestablished

literacy skills. The social context program acknowledged the undereducated adult's history of negative resignation toward learning as it affected the process of goal formation through activity.

The Social Context Adult Literacy Curriculum contained the following features essential to the process of student literacy goal formation through activity:

Learning groups. Small learning groups were formed from members of a social unit with common interests and needs. A learning group structure provided the individual student with a peer support unit facilitating attendance, retention, goal and motive formation, and the development of self-knowledge during engagement in collective literacy activities.

Open access. Open access to the program was used to curtail isolating students from their social unit. In the open access program, student withdrawal was anticipated, and students were provided counseling in further educational options when they chose to exit.

Instructional phases. The transition phase included nonthreatening reading and writing group activities used to move students from literacy isolation to motivation for literacy improvement. When the transition phase ended, students' perceptions reflected formation of the goal to improve their literacy functioning by requesting more structure learning activities. The maintenance phase contained more structured reading and writing activities used to teach students mediational

devices that promote student independence in continued literacy improvement.

Staff. The social context approach required a staff competent in the field of adult learning. This made the curriculum less conducive to implementation than traditional adult literacy programs that require minimal training for lay tutors. The social context teacher emphasized peer support, group collaboration, and successful group involvement by initiating and encouraging group social interaction during activity engagement. As instruction proceeded, the teacher moved into a mediational role providing guidance in student selection of materials, selection of learning activities, and strategy application.

Physical environment. The transformation from resignation toward learning to developing goals and motives for literacy improvement entailed student movement from transparency to visibility in the adult literate world. Library and computer lab access were important components of the physical environment that provided support for students' need to be seen in adult settings, using adult materials, and engaging in adult literacy activities.

Recommendations

The social context activity model of adult instruction is in an embryonic state of development and needs generalized to other social units identified in our society. The curriculum requires extensive replication and modification preserving the essential features of the concept of activity (Leont'ev, 1978, 1981).

Additional maintenance phase strategy training activities need to be investigated using student reflection as the internalization product of activity structure (Davydad, 1981). Further investigations of cognitive activity in communication (see Kol'tsov, 1978) are needed to clarify the content of social interaction and its effects on cognition and self-knowledge growth during group literacy activity.

Finally, further investigation is needed in the assessment of adult learners' perceptions that are used to guide literacy instruction. From the social context perspective, we caution investigators about the trade-off between the Western perspective of attaining "pure" quantifiable measures of student achievement that can decontextualize the adult learner from instruction versus exploring more precise attitude surveys and informal data collection that connect the learner with literacy instructional goals.

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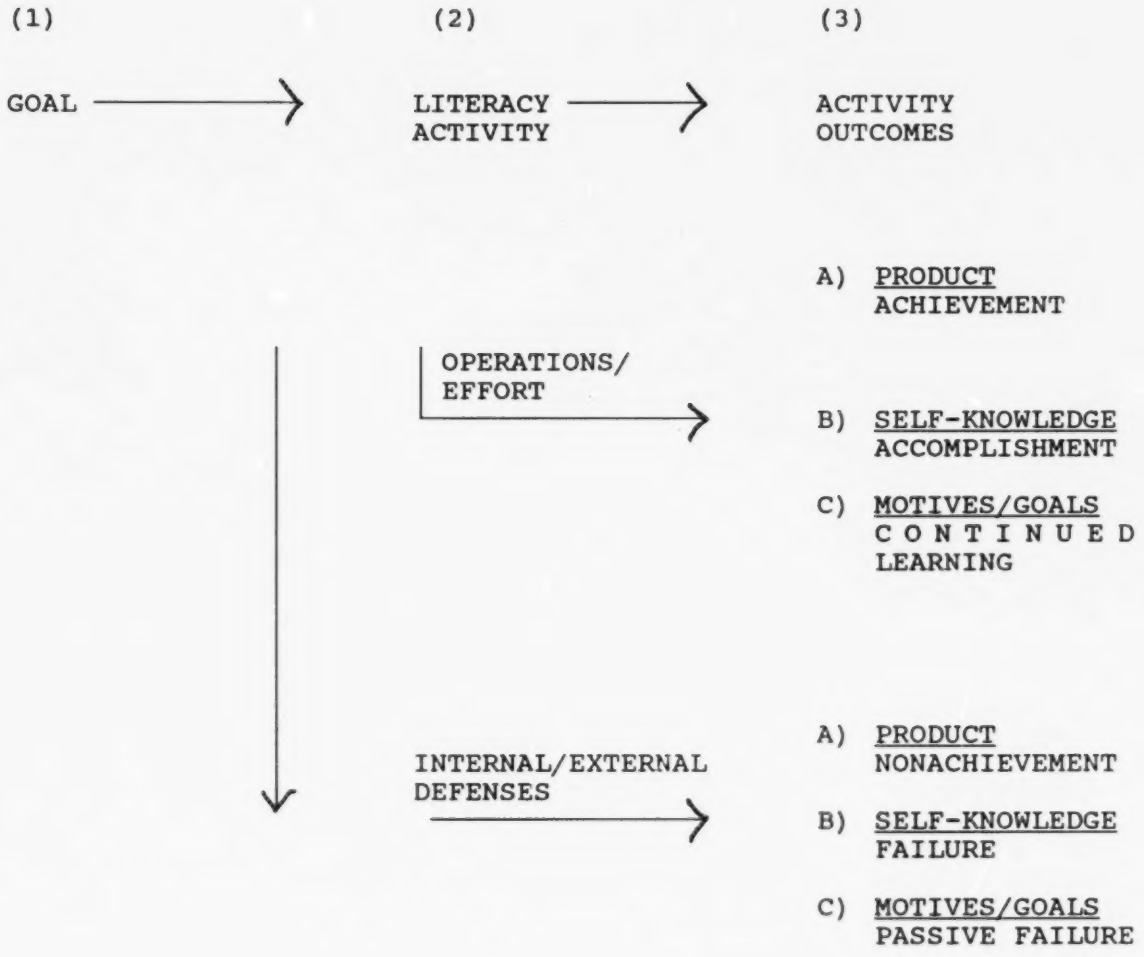
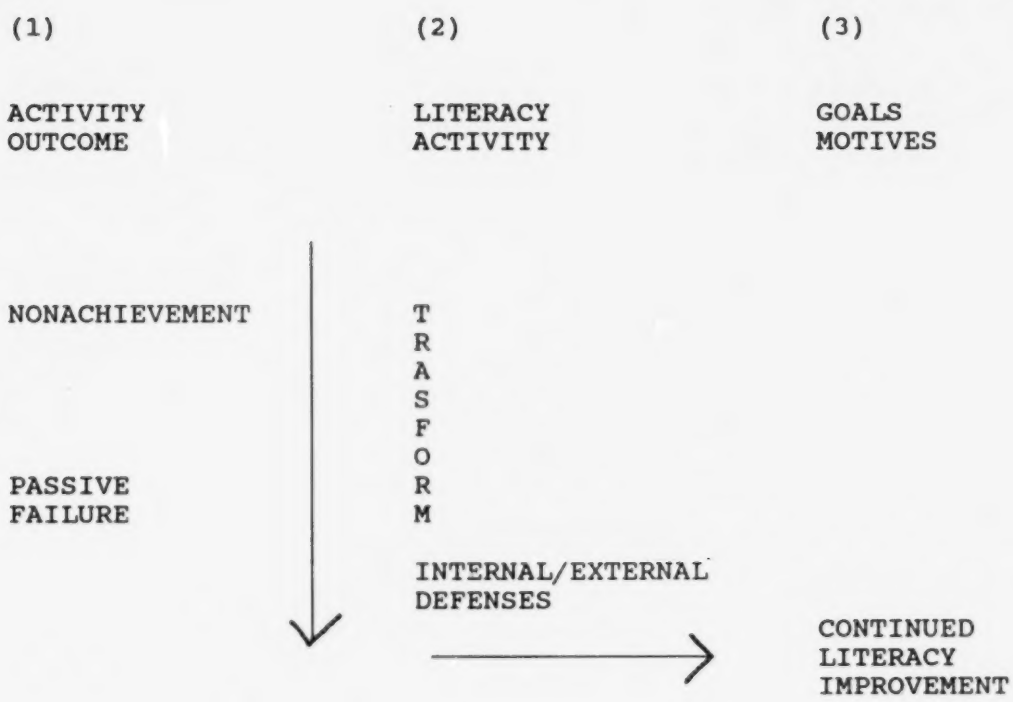
Figure Captions

Figure 1: Developmental literacy activity.

Figure 2: Adult literacy activity.


(1)
(2)
(3)
GOAL
LITERACY ACTIVITY
ACTIVITY OUTCOMES
A) PRODUCT ACHIEVEMENT
OPERATIONS/ EFFORT
B) SELF-KNOWLEDGE ACCOMPLISHMENT
C) MOTIVES/GOALS C O N T I N U E D LEARNING
INTERNAL/EXTERNAL DEFENSES
A) PRODUCT NONACHIEVEMENT
B) SELF-KNOWLEDGE FAILURE
C) MOTIVES/GOALS PASSIVE FAILURE


(1)
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ACTIVITY OUTCOME
LITERACY ACTIVITY
GOALS MOTIVES
NONACHIEVEMENT
PASSIVE FAILURE
TRASFORM
INTERNAL/EXTERNAL DEFENSES
CONTINUED LITERACY IMPROVEMENT